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**58th PLENARY MEETING**

*Friday, 19 November 1993*
*at 10 a.m.*

**NEW YORK**

*President*: Mr. INSANALLY
(Guyana)

***The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.***

**AGENDA ITEM 175**

**EMERGENCY ACTION TO COMBAT LOCUST INFESTATION IN AFRICA: DRAFT RESOLUTION (A/48/L.22)**

***The PRESIDENT:*** May I remind members that item 175 was included in the agenda of the current session on Wednesday, 17 November, and that in view of its urgent character the Assembly decided it should be considered as soon as possible.

At that time I informed the Assembly that I was scheduling agenda item 175 for this morning on the understanding that it would not be debated and that the Assembly would have before it a draft resolution for consideration. That draft resolution is now before the Assembly in document A/48/L.22.

I now call on the representative of Algeria, who will introduce the draft resolution.

***Mr. LAMAMRA*** (Algeria) (*interpretation from French*): It is an honour and a privilege for me to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/48/L.22, entitled "Emergency action to combat locust infestation in Africa", on behalf of all the African States Members of the United Nations and also of the following States: Belgium, Canada, China, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. This list of co-sponsors, which is extremely encouraging, in itself demonstrates the great interest that is accorded to this question.

At this point, allow me to express to you, Mr. President, my great appreciation and gratitude for your valuable assistance, which will make it possible for us to take a rapid decision on this urgent issue in the General Assembly today.

The request for the inclusion of this additional item in the agenda of the current session of the General Assembly is justified by the exceptional gravity and the real dangers of the scourge of locust infestation in Africa, which calls for urgent action by the international community.

In support of that request, the Secretary-General received a letter dated 15 November 1993 from the Chairman of the African Group. This letter was accompanied by an explanatory memorandum, issued as document A/48/245.

The scourge of locust infestation repeatedly afflicts vast regions in Africa, especially in the Sahel and the Maghreb regions, and on each occasion it has wide-ranging consequences for the economies of the affected countries. This year again the dimension of this devastating phenomenon was equal to and even greater than in the past. The most recent information provided by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) presents a detailed account of the deterioration of the situation in Africa and indicates that the anti-locust campaigns have not so far succeeded in putting an end to the infestation, in particular because of the limited means available to the affected countries. This information also

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depicts a decline in agricultural output, environmental degradation and a displacement of affected populations which could last for several years.

Faced with this disturbing situation, the FAO, through its Director-General, appealed to the international community on 2 August this year, alerting it to the deterioration of the situation in the affected countries and to the need to undertake immediate international emergency action to put an end to locust infestation in Africa.

Furthermore, aware of the real dangers and potential threats to nature and the economies of the affected countries, the countries of the region have reacted by engaging in a careful identification of the means of action available to them to confront the threat together. The Ministers of Agriculture entrusted with the struggle against locusts in the countries of the Sahel and of the Maghreb held an extraordinary meeting in Algiers on 27 September 1993 in order to harmonize their efforts and once again alert the international community to the potential risks and real dangers that weigh heavily on the affected countries in the wake of this natural catastrophe. The work of this ministerial meeting led to the adoption of an emergency plan of action drawn up by experts from the region on 1 and 2 September 1993 in Tunis and issued as United Nations document A/C.2/48/6. However, today it seems that the means mobilized by the affected countries are inadequate to eradicate this infestation and deal with its consequences. The support of the international community therefore becomes essential.

I am happy to note that the international community has never been indifferent to the appeals addressed to it each time this scourge has manifested itself. We do not doubt that the international community will again today discharge its duty of solidarity with the same rapidity and level of support. We welcome the support already expressed by many members of the international community for this initiative. We hope these expressions of sympathy and solidarity will be effectively and practically translated into actions that meet the expectations of the countries affected.

The purpose of the draft resolution submitted today to the Assembly is to reaffirm the commitment of the international community, in particular our developed partners and the United Nations system, to support fully the locust control programmes undertaken by the affected countries at the national, subregional and regional levels. It is intended also to involve the entire United Nations system more in this enterprise, in particular the FAO, which is called upon today to implement the emergency plan of action speedily and to undertake any complementary activities that could help bring the situation in the front-line countries under control.

Furthermore, this draft resolution, bearing in mind the deterioration of the situation, requests the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, in collaboration with the Secretary-General, to keep the situation under constant review and to organize a pledging conference as early as possible in the first quarter of 1994, with a view to mobilizing the necessary financial and other resources to provide effective assistance to affected countries in their efforts to combat the locust infestation in the African continent.

The draft resolution of which the Assembly is seized today has been the subject of extensive consultations. We hope that the international community will once again show its solidarity with Africa and that this appeal to solidarity will find its expected response in the speedy adoption of this draft resolution by consensus, enabling all our countries and the United Nations system to mobilize without delay the necessary means for the speedy implementation of the emergency plan of action in support of the affected countries.

***The PRESIDENT:*** The General Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/48/L.22.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution?

***Draft resolution A/48/L.22 was adopted*** (resolution 48/20).

***The PRESIDENT***: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 175?

***It was so decided.***

## AGENDA ITEM 44

## STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/48/536)

***The PRESIDENT***: The report of the Secretary-General in document A/48/536 is the first comprehensive report submitted to the General Assembly since the adoption of its resolution 46/182 two years ago and the subsequent establishment by the Secretary-General of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

We are gratified to note that the Department, since its inception 18 months ago, has facilitated timely and coordinated system-wide response to the humanitarian needs of some 58.5 million people in complex emergencies in 26 countries, as well as to the victims of 107 natural disasters.

Today, we shall embark on a discussion of the challenges of coordinating such humanitarian responses. The report before the Assembly describes the lessons learned and experience gained since the establishment of the Department headed by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Jan Eliasson. The report outlines important areas that require consideration by the Assembly with a view to giving further guidance and making appropriate recommendations to enhance the capacity of the United Nations system to respond to emergencies, in particular those arising from the growing number of conflicts around the world.

I should like to propose, if there is no objection, that the list of speakers in the debate on this item be closed at 12 noon today.

***It was so decided.***

***The PRESIDENT***: I therefore request those representatives wishing to participate in the debate to inscribe their names as soon as possible.

***Mr. REY CORDOBA*** (Colombia) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: On behalf of the Group of 77 and the People's Republic of China, I should like to thank the Secretary-General and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Jan Eliasson, for the report introduced on 18 October on the activities of the Department relative to the coordination of humanitarian assistance.

I should like to discuss the agenda item before us today in the context of General Assembly resolution 46/182 and of the conclusions of the coordination segment of the last session of the Economic and Social Council.

We have spent valuable time in the Economic and Social Council and in the General Assembly in reviewing mechanisms for coordinating humanitarian assistance in all its aspects, for, given the fact that natural disasters and other types of emergencies make no allowances for either distance or delay, we deem it essential that such assistance be as effective as possible. Humanitarian assistance is of vital importance to disaster victims, and it must therefore be provided in accordance with the principles of neutrality and impartiality and with constant respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of the States where the disasters occur.

The General Assembly provided the United Nations with the instruments necessary to improve humanitarian assistance and ensure a timely response in the disaster areas. Principal among those instruments are the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), consolidated appeals, the Central Emergency Revolving Fund and the Emergency Relief Coordinator, whose role is vital since he must not only coordinate action in cases of disaster but also consolidate appeals and, above all, obtain funding to ensure that the entire mechanism can function and can do so in a timely fashion.

The establishment of those instruments has proven to be highly effective and necessary. Natural and other disasters have increased over the past year, affecting millions of people throughout the world. More than 130 natural disasters and complex emergencies have received aid from the international community since the adoption of resolution 46/182, and we do not know how many more may have gone unnoticed since they were not the focus of international attention. I refer to those "silent emergencies" that go unnoticed because the world has become accustomed to living with them since they do not have media attention, emergencies that are for the most part caused by poverty, underdevelopment and lack of access to minimal living standards. Such emergencies must be related to the concept of rehabilitation and development after the emergency relief. They must be dealt with in the framework of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and must be rapidly provided with resources such as those provided through the revolving Fund. There is no point in timely reaction to a disaster if the afflicted populations do not, afterwards, have the means to rebuild the minimal infrastructure necessary for life, access to basic services and workplaces, and a means of returning to their homes if they have been displaced.

The General Assembly must also consider the so-called complex emergencies, which in most cases include military interventions, political crises and peace-keeping operations. Such emergencies must be given due attention through the system, never for a moment losing sight of the attention which the Department of Humanitarian Affairs must at the same time devote to natural disasters. There are mechanisms to ensure speedy action in such cases, and we see no need for them to be linked to other organs, such as the Security Council, in order for them to receive immediate action. The General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council are the proper bodies in the system through which afflicted countries should channel their appeals when such emergencies occur.

The Department of Humanitarian Affairs must act in accordance with the mandate given it by those two bodies

and in coordination with the other agencies in the system through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, which has proved its usefulness. When an emergency involves a peace-keeping operation there is an even greater need to respect the principle of impartiality. Military action must not be linked to humanitarian assistance, and humanitarian assistance must never for any reason be conditioned or subjected to linkage. All persons affected by the conflict must receive assistance.

Although there is a need for a team coordinator, we would emphasize that in the case of complex emergencies involving peace-keeping operations the coordinator of the humanitarian operation must not be the same person as the one who is acting as coordinator of the peace-keeping operation, since otherwise neutrality or impartiality might be lost.

Coordination in the field must be improved. The afflicted country bears primary responsibility for the coordination of humanitarian aid, with the assistance of a coordinator from the United Nations system to help the Government of the afflicted country channel the aid from all of the United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and donor countries. Such coordination, which already exists, has been successful but must nevertheless be improved.

Each agency must act in the context of the mandate given to it by the General Assembly and in areas where it has a comparative advantage. Duplication, impediments, and, in particular, the creation of any new levels of bureaucracy must be avoided.

In this context, we should like to request a review of the amount that has been allocated to the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF). This Fund, which was established with a base of $50 million, has proved its great usefulness to the agencies that have had access to it. Since its establishment, in May 1992, it has dispersed $52.6 million and has recovered $22.5 million. As the agencies are increasingly resorting to CERF in the initial stages of an emergency, and as the recovery of funds is slower, the resources in the Fund must be increased. We request the Secretary-General to review the situation and to submit to the General Assembly a recommendation on the extent to which the Fund should be increased, bearing in mind that the fact that greater use will be made of it will ensure that bodies such as the World Migration Organization will have access to it.

Similarly, the consolidated-appeals machinery has shown itself to be one of the most effective instruments of coordination. Consolidated appeals are based on visits to the field and on consultation with the competent United Nations bodies, such as non-governmental and other international aid organizations. We are glad that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, together with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, is currently reviewing the principles for formulating the appeals, and we hope that, in the course of this process, proper account will be taken of the needs of the countries affected. In particular, we hope that the Governments will be consulted, as, in the final analysis, it is they who know best the needs of their peoples.

We call on the donor countries to respond speedily to these consolidated appeals. While the number of appeals has increased, the response to them appears to be stagnant. The gap between requests and volunteered resources must not continue to widen, as that would result in the loss of the credibility of an instrument that has been solicited by the developing countries.

I cannot fail to mention the importance that the Group of 77 and the People's Republic of China attach to the question of the continuum. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs and its Director must play a fundamental role in the coordination of rehabilitation and development activities in areas affected by natural disasters or other emergencies. The effects of natural disasters are felt most seriously by developing countries - not because such disasters are more acute in the South than in the North, but because poverty makes houses and infrastructures vulnerable to demolition in natural disasters.

The capacity of our countries to respond is limited and when the immediate crisis has passed millions of persons find themselves living in a state of total desolation. This is why we urge the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to continue to devote its attention to rehabilitation and development. Agencies in the system should design long-range programmes for rehabilitation and reconstruction. The Department must provide resources for that purpose and must urge non-governmental and State organizations to do likewise. The emergency team must not be disbanded until there is a concrete programme for rehabilitation and development.

I should like to stress the importance that our countries attach to the question of humanitarian assistance and pledge the cooperation and commitment of the Group of 77 and the People's Republic of China to strengthening coordination in this field.

***Mr. NOTERDAEME*** (Belgium) *(interpretation from French)*: I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union.

Resolution 46/182 has been in effect for two years and has proved to be an indispensable and complete basic document. We welcome the achievements of the past two years in the coordination of the humanitarian activities of the United Nations, as well as the enormous amount of work that has been done by the Emergency Relief Coordinator and his staff. The Coordinator, through his commitment - often personal and painstaking - has made a worthy contribution to the implementation of the humanitarian assistance programme of the United Nations.

We have dealt comprehensively with the coordination of humanitarian assistance between the relevant United Nations agencies at last July's session of the Economic and Social Council. The Council's agreed conclusions (1993/1) on the coordination of humanitarian assistance contain a number of valuable recommendations for improving the capacity of the United Nations, through the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Food Programme, to make a timely and effective response to major and complex emergencies and to natural disasters.

In this context, we particularly welcome the Economic and Social Council's insistence that the Emergency Assistance Coordinator participate fully in all United Nations planning in response to complex emergencies, to ensure that the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality are observed fully in the granting of emergency assistance. The Economic and Social Council has also acknowledged its role in the aspects of humanitarian diplomacy and its duty to facilitate access to regions where emergency situations exist.

Furthermore, we support the Economic and Social Council's view on the importance of the Secretary-General's role, undertaken through the Emergency Relief Coordinator, and its conclusion that appropriate consideration, specifically in the context of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, should be given to major and complex emergencies - primary responsibility being assigned to the operational agencies, under the full control and coordination of the Emergency Assistance Coordinator. We should like to take this opportunity to invite the Secretariat to tell us how matters stand with regard to the attainment of this end. We should appreciate the Secretariat's providing us with this information before the end of the debate on this item.

It is clear that the quality of coordination in the field determines to a great extent the quality of the response of the United Nations to major and complex emergencies and natural disasters. We welcome the fact that the Economic and Social Council took note of the work of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. At the same time, we believe that this Committee should meet more frequently and should become the forum for genuine concerted action on emergency situations. We urge the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs to carry out structural reforms with a view to transforming the New York unit into a small and effective decision-making cell, with the Geneva services discharging their operational function fully. We urge also that the role of everyone operating on the ground in emergency situations be determined speedily.

The discussion at this session of the General Assembly should deal mainly with two aspects of humanitarian assistance: first, the evaluation of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF); and, secondly, the problem of the financing of coordination arrangements during the initial phase of an emergency.

During the almost two years of its existence, the Central Emergency Revolving Fund has shown its usefulness. This mechanism of self-financing has been widely used by the various agencies. In order to maintain the function and operation of the Fund it is essential that it should remain self-replenishing.

Increasing the Fund does not strike us as essential. We believe that the obligation to reimburse the Fund is not always respected as quickly as possible. Given this fact, we fear that merely to enlarge the Fund would be detrimental to its self-renewable nature. Given the needs, we do not think it is necessary to maintain a threshold of $15 million. That strikes us as being too high. Attention could also be given to shortening the time allowed for reimbursing the Fund.

As regards the field of the users of the Fund, it is clear we have no objection to including the International Organization for Migration (IOM) among them.

We have noted time and again that the problem of financing coordination during the initial phase of an emergency has been referred to. However, there has been no clear and convincing evidence that a new channel of financing should be opened. If a problem exists, it has certainly not been defined. Does it arise in a situation where there is no United Nations presence? Is it where a number of agencies are represented? What is the scope of the needs and the amounts? How far does the initial phase go? These are questions which should be answered first.

Inasmuch as there are many models of coordination in the field there must be many kinds of situations in which this need for financing exists. One cannot therefore exclude any option at this stage and it would be premature

for the General Assembly to decide right now in favour of one approach or another. We believe that the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) is the specific framework within which this problem should be considered. The Committee should first define the problem as quickly as possible and then propose some solutions. Interim solutions could be envisaged if they are well defined in time and in scope.

Our attention should also be given to the prevention of disasters. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs has a specific task to perform in that regard through the Secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. Recent changes in the internal structures of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs are designed to improve the carrying out of their tasks in this regard. The European Union is pleased about that. We would however like to be better informed concerning the manner in which the tasks are allocated within the Department itself.

There is no need to prove the usefulness of a warning system. We note that many efforts are made by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to collect and disseminate information on disasters or emergency situations. In so far as many emergencies can be foreseen, the United Nations should be in a position to work out and assess the actions and programmes which it will have to carry out in good time. However, a more structured system should be set up for channelling this information and communicating it to the donor countries and to the countries in the region. We welcome the establishment of the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) Stand-by Team, in which several countries of the European Union participate, and we hope that the Operations Centre will be able to undertake its functions as soon as possible. Together with the disaster management training programme these preparatory elements will strengthen the coordination set-up of the United Nations.

The European Union hopes that at this session of the General Assembly we will be in a position to find an adequate solution to the question of the security of the staff working in the humanitarian sector. Humanitarian actions often have to be carried out in situations where there is no longer any designated responsibility and where banditry rules. This problem arises also - and often to a greater degree - for personnel of non-governmental organizations. We regret it and we condemn all action that is directed against these people.

It is difficult to guarantee preventive security in the field, but it should be possible for the Secretariat of the United Nations to guarantee an administrative security. To that end we welcome initiatives for strengthening the protection of humanitarian staff in accordance with the norms and principles of international law. We hope that these protective measures will prove satisfactory and that non-governmental organizations, for their part, will also benefit from measures of protection.

At its last session the Economic and Social Council dealt in detail with the aspect of the continuum towards rehabilitation and development. It is clear that each instance of humanitarian assistance is but a step towards the final objective, sustainable development. We note that working groups are being formed at several levels to deal with the continuum. We welcome that fact and we hope that their activities will be fully coordinated. Humanitarian assistance cannot be carried out in isolation and the actions of these groups ought also to be such that they can be placed and justified within the greater framework of development. We therefore fully support the efforts of the working group of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on the subject and we await the results of their work with great interest.

The European Union welcomes resolution 48/7 on assistance in mine clearance and we believe that the attention the United Nations gives to this devastating problem will contribute to sustainable development in the regions affected.

***BARONESS CHALKER OF WALLASEY*** (United Kingdom): I am happy to associate the United Kingdom fully with the excellent statement just delivered by the Permanent Representative of the Belgian presidency on behalf of the European Union.

Almost exactly a year ago I addressed the General Assembly on the same subject we are examining today: how to strengthen the coordination of the United Nations emergency humanitarian response. I said then that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, just seven months old, was having a baptism of fire. One year on, the flames of that fiery baptism show no sign of dying out.

Many of the humanitarian emergencies that faced us then still challenge us today. In Somalia and the former Yugoslavia innocent civilians still endure the suffering that conflict brings. Almost daily the list grows ever longer. In Angola, Georgia, Sudan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Burundi, Tajikistan, and in many other places, conflict blights the innocent lives of ordinary people. Those are the people who are in the wrong place at the wrong time. Those who suffer as a result of natural disasters are just as devastated as those who suffer man's inhumanity to man. The terrible earthquake that struck Maharashtra in September was a sombre reminder of that.

We welcome this opportunity twelve months on to review the United Nations emergency response, and particularly the work of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. We should never underestimate the demands faced by that Department and all the United Nations humanitarian agencies. Those demands place a great strain on the United Nations humanitarian system, and indeed on bilateral donors. The staff of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the agencies work with dedication and tenacity, usually in very difficult conditions and often in danger.

We are in danger of expecting too much too quickly in strengthening the capacity of United Nations humanitarian assistance. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs has been in existence for just one and a half years. It has to link into numerous other agencies, some less willing than others to coordinate and strengthen the complex United Nations system. It is not the role of Member States to try to micro-manage that system. But we continue to believe that resolution 46/182, which established the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, remains a sound basis on which to build. With the ever growing number of humanitarian emergencies, there is a greater need than ever for effective coordination.

There are several simple, straightforward measures that can be taken to streamline procedures and coordinate the system better. The conclusions agreed at the Economic and Social Council in Geneva in July provide a good framework for action. I do not propose to discuss those conclusions in detail; members are all familiar with them. But I will address four key elements in the framework.

The first is a more active and central role for the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. The Committee must meet more often if it is to fulfil its potential as the prime forum for coordination of the United Nations humanitarian system. Its decisions must become more action-oriented, and must be communicated quickly and effectively to the United Nations operations on the ground. To complement the Committee's work, the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Working Group must also increase the frequency of its meetings and improve its focus.

Secondly, adjustments should be made to the Central Emergency Revolving Fund to make it more effective. The financial regulations should be reviewed to allow disbursements to be made swiftly and with the least possible bureaucratic impediment. With the right adjustments, the Fund could become an invaluable financial tool for use by United Nations agencies in the early stages of an emergency. We continue to believe that the Fund's revolving nature, which gives it essential flexibility and continuity, must be preserved.

Thirdly, the process for drawing up and presenting consolidated appeals must be improved. The consolidated appeal system is a valuable innovation. Appeals should be put together by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the agencies, donors and non-governmental organizations at field level. This will ensure that they reflect real needs. There should also be greater prioritization within appeals so that the greatest needs are the first to be met. But it is vital that this consultative process be done swiftly. It should not slow down the availability of money to the agencies that need it most. And donors responding to the appeals have an equal responsibility to fulfil promptly any commitments they make.

Fourthly, the Under-Secretary-General and his Department should increasingly adopt the role of humanitarian advocate at every level within the United Nations system. In complex emergencies it is difficult, if not impossible, to separate humanitarian from political issues. That is why humanitarian considerations must be incorporated at every step of the decision-making process.

For those reasons, the United Kingdom firmly believes that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs must continue to retain a strong presence in New York, where its personnel may have easy access to the key institutions of the United Nations.

The Department's role in promoting the humanitarian cause within the United Nations system is crucial. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs needs its Geneva base too. This is essential if better coordination between the United Nations agencies and the non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations - particularly the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Federation of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies - is to be achieved. We need to improve the capacity of each relevant part of the United Nations family to contribute to a more effective United Nations emergency response; the Department of Humanitarian Affairs was formed not to act on the ground in an emergency, but to ensure that, working together, the United Nations agencies deliver the relief so sorely needed.

Geneva will continue to be the base for those aspects of the Department's work that enable it to contribute effectively to the coordination of relief activities in the field. Resolution 46/182 envisaged the Department of Humanitarian Affairs not as an operational agency, but as a facilitating body. That is how we continue to see the Department's role. From time to time, the Department will have a coordination role to play in the field. We therefore welcome the recent agreement between the Department and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which sets out a clear framework for United Nations field

arrangements in emergencies. It is important that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs now focus and prioritize its work in support of its core tasks, so that it does not overstretch its already limited resources.

Here I would like to pay tribute to the unsung heroes of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. These are the people who have ben working quietly away, making real progress in implementing many of the specific recommendations set out in resolution 46/182: the disaster mitigation branch and the secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, which do sterling work in disaster preparedness; the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Stand-by Team; the UNDP-Department of Humanitarian Affairs Disaster Management Training Programme; and the staff who have set up the Emergency Stockpile Register. These are areas of work that do not have media appeal. Yet these quiet successes show that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs can and does work.

That is why the United Kingdom continues to support fully the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. As the Assembly has heard, this support is shared by all the States of the European Union. The establishment of the Department and the appointment of the Emergency Relief Coordinator were innovative steps. We still believe in those innovations. We, as an international community, owe it to those who suffer in emergencies to make the United Nations humanitarian system work better. Together with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations agencies and the international and non-governmental organizations, we will strive to achieve that aim.

**Mr. ALBIN** (Mexico) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: My delegation wishes first to thank the Secretary-General for his report, and to thank Mr. Jan Eliasson, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for the additional information he has provided.

My delegation fully supports the statement made this morning by the current Chairman of the Group of 77.

Few activities more clearly reflect the great worthiness of the purposes of the United Nations than the provision of humanitarian assistance. Two years ago, after considerable negotiation, the General Assembly adopted resolution 46/182, establishing a framework for the activities of the United Nations system in coordinating and distributing such assistance.

Mexico reiterates its full support for the spirit and the letter of the principles contained in that resolution. We are, however, concerned to note that there is a tendency to give priority to so-called complex emergencies over natural disasters and other emergencies. Above and beyond the discussions and perceptions of what constitutes an emergency, the United Nations must adhere strictly to the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality, with full respect for the sovereignty of the States to which aid is given. This is the only way to preserve the truly humanitarian nature of assistance.

Decisions relating to humanitarian assistance must be taken solely by the relevant bodies - the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly - because of the basically social and humanitarian nature of the action taken. Abiding by principles and respect for the responsibility of these bodies will enhance the international community's trust and confidence in the humanitarian nature of the assistance provided by the Organization.

My delegation considers that the United Nations would only partially meet its objectives if its outlook were restricted to assistance. We believe that a large part of the effects of natural disasters could be reduced, and some of the causes of the so-called other emergencies could be diminished, if the United Nations contributed towards achieving a more equitable world order.

In this context, we cannot hide our concern that in recent reports of the Secretary-General less attention has been given to rehabilitation and development. This situation must be corrected. We call upon the Department and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to restore the priority which in our view these areas should retain in plans and actions.

I should now like to emphasize the importance of strengthening coordination of humanitarian assistance, both in the field and at Headquarters, under the leadership of the Department. We recognize the measures that various United Nations agencies have taken to enhance coordination. We hope that these efforts will continue and that the role of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee will grow in importance. In the field, the country concerned bears the primary responsibility for the general coordination of humanitarian assistance. The Resident Coordinator must play this role in inter-institutional cooperation within the United Nations system.

Mexico considers that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs must make a more dynamic contribution to activities carried out within the context of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, in connection with which an international conference will be held next year in Yokohama, Japan.

Finally, we also consider that the agenda item on coordination of humanitarian assistance and the related reports of the Secretary-General could be debated every two years by the General Assembly, rather than annually, as it has been so far.

**Mr. HOMANN-HERIMBERG** (Austria): This last decade of our present century may well be remembered as a period of time that, in the aftermath of the cold war, was characterized by the break-up of nations, ethnic conflicts and devastating natural disasters. Burundi, Rwanda, Somalia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Caucasus region, and Bangladesh are only some of the examples. Unfortunately, the list is long. We deplore the toll that natural and man-made disasters have taken on human life and the particularly severe economic and social impact they have had on developing countries.

In the discussions preceding the adoption of resolution 46/182 Austria strongly supported the establishment of new mechanisms for the United Nations system's response to emergencies, whether natural or man-made. Since then the unprecedented number of humanitarian emergencies world wide have put the new arrangements under severe strain as regards managerial, operational and political issues.

With the review of the coordination aspects during the summer session of the Economic and Social Council, a certain stock-taking has already taken place, and it is reflected in the agreed conclusions. However, it is up to this session of the General Assembly to review the effectiveness of the current arrangements and therefore to measure achievements against the objectives intended by the "mother resolution".

While the resolution may not have been perfect in some respects, we believe that its guiding principles continue to serve as a sufficient basis and that it provides instruments for the "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations".

We are encouraged by the political atmosphere surrounding questions of humanitarian assistance. While the negotiators of resolution 46/182 had to grapple with difficult questions of sovereignty, in the implementation phase the true problems have turned out to be more problems of resources and coordination, although we must not minimize the other problems that remain, particularly that of access.

With regard to coordination, we recognize that over the past two years progress has been made, as is also indicated in the Secretary-General's report. However, more must be done to bring the United Nations reaction to emergency situations into line with the growing challenges. In this respect, we believe full implementation of the Economic and Social Council conclusions could go a long way, and we hope that their review at the regular session in 1994 will be accorded the required time.

Through the establishment of the position of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, recognition was given to the importance of the subject and public awareness was considerably enhanced. We pay tribute to Under-Secretary-General Eliasson for putting a number of functional issues higher up on the political agenda of Member States. In this respect I should also like to mention demining, an area on which the General Assembly focused explicitly for the first time only during this current session; internally displaced persons; security of humanitarian personnel; and advocacy for the humanitarian mandate of the United Nations.

The creation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs was meant to provide a support structure for the Coordinator. At the same time, it created a bureaucracy which, by its very nature, is not necessarily a facilitator in the response to emergencies.

The division of responsibilities within the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and between New York and Geneva remains unclear. Many inefficiencies have resulted, and so have misunderstandings and frustration. We encourage the Emergency Relief Coordinator to continue his consideration of this aspect, taking into account the comparative advantages of New York and Geneva.

We also suggest that, once a decision is taken, the Secretary-General should authorize the Emergency Relief Coordinator to delegate to the Department's Geneva Office authority commensurate with its responsibility. At the same time, we hope that further improvements in coordination and management mechanisms can be made at both Headquarters and field levels, and that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs will draw on staff that is truly experienced in emergency management.

We believe that it must be the Department's foremost objective to provide leadership on behalf of the Secretary-General and to function as facilitator and coordinator for the international community. This also means that the Coordinator and his Department must receive the fullest cooperation in partnership with the other players in the system.

Particularly in situations where the political and humanitarian dimensions are interlinked, the relationship between humanitarian emergency assistance, political matters and peace-keeping is of critical importance. In

such situations, it is also necessary to give attention to the need to safeguard the neutrality of emergency assistance.

It is obvious that cooperation in partnership is required for the proper functioning of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and its Working Group. This, indeed, is the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination, and it should therefore proceed in an action-oriented manner on policy issues related to humanitarian assistance and formulate coherent and timely United Nations responses to disasters and major, complex emergencies.

As all members of the IASC are equally responsible for its effective functioning, we encourage them to intensify their consideration of subjects such as division of labour, field coordination arrangements, information management, disaster management training, gaps in the response to emergencies and the all-important continuum from emergency assistance to long-term development.

As regards this continuum, we believe that the question ought to be addressed in a more operational way within the United Nations system, as well as between United Nations agencies, the Bretton Woods institutions, bilateral donors and non-governmental organizations, leading to an integration of this concept into United Nations development activities.

As we have already observed, demands on the international community for emergency assistance have reached unprecedented levels. At the same time capacities to meet them are overstretched and the resources for response are not unlimited. More attention will therefore have to be paid to cost-reducing measures for relief operations and to cost avoidance through early warning, preventive diplomacy and preventive development.

While the Central Emergency Revolving Fund has proved its value, we share the opinion that its operation could be improved by streamlining its procedures and by ensuring timely repayment of funds advanced.

As regards the consolidated inter-agency appeals process, we have noted from the Secretary-General's report that greater attention will be given to the priorities accorded activities resulting from comprehensive and realistic projections of relief requirements.

The Secretary-General's report clearly shows that sudden-onset natural disasters and similar emergencies continue to be a major preoccupation for the international community. We concur that it must be the Department's primary objective to play a catalytic role in the promotion of disaster-mitigation strategies - that is, prevention and preparedness - particularly in developing countries.

Within the framework of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction constructive work has already been accomplished, and the forthcoming World Conference in Yokohama will provide a further impetus.

With regard to the important question of response to disasters, a number of measures to strengthen stand-by capacities have been taken. Austria is pleased to be participating actively in some of these, such as the establishment of the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) Stand-by Team. In this connection, the Austrian Government hosted and organized, together with the Department, a simulation of relief efforts after a major earthquake; the simulation was known as "Exercise '93".

This and other stand-by capacity-building measures should not be limited in their application only to use in response to natural disasters. In this context, preparation of operational guidelines for the use of military and civil defence assets to deliver relief assistance following large-scale emergencies should also be mentioned.

In the aftermath of the recent events in Georgia, members of the Austrian armed forces joined in an operation sponsored by the Department to bring urgently required assistance to the suffering civilian population.

Two years ago, the international community unequivocally declared that humanitarian assistance is of cardinal importance for the victims of disasters and emergencies, and that such assistance must be provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality.

The Secretary-General himself has reminded us that the right to humanitarian assistance remains a fundamental issue, and that leadership in humanitarian diplomacy is needed to address it on behalf of the United Nations operational organizations; obtaining access to emergency-affected populations where circumstances prevent the provision of humanitarian assistance was rightly underlined in this connection.

We fully agree with this emphasis, but what is the reality in Bosnia and Herzegovina? This winter, access to the victims is going to make the difference between life and death. International law and international humanitarian law have set clear standards in this respect too. It is simply unacceptable that they are not being observed.

We have noted in this respect that Mrs. Ogata, in her capacity as Chairperson of the humanitarian issues working group of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia and in the presence of the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, yesterday signed an important declaration together with representatives of the parties involved. We join Mrs. Ogata in her appeal to the parties to honour their commitments to respect human rights, international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles.

We are convinced that only determined and decisive political action by Member States together with the Secretary-General can pave the way for the victims of conflicts and disasters world wide to receive the help to which they aspire and to which they are entitled.

Here I should like to express our respect and admiration for the relief workers of the operational agencies, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Food Programme, and also of the non-governmental organization community, who, under often intolerable security conditions, are trying to relieve human suffering. We pay a tribute to those who have had to give their lives in the performance of their duty.

**Mrs. ALBRIGHT** (United States of America): I welcome the opportunity to address the General Assembly today regarding the pressing subject of humanitarian assistance.

The community of nations should do all it reasonably can to relieve the suffering resulting from natural and human-caused disaster. But meeting this responsibility is growing more difficult. Devastation wrought by nature's fury is more than matched by the fury and folly of humankind. Ethnic and other subnational conflicts have created unprecedented demands for United Nations help. The number of displaced persons and refugees - the international homeless - is at an all-time high. The fabric of the international relief system has been stretched taut.

Over the years United Nations agencies with a relief role have saved countless lives. There are enormous grounds for pride in what has been accomplished. But when we contemplate current and future challenges there are no grounds for complacency.

A look around the world tells us that the infectious consequences of conflict continue to spread. Africa alone is home to a dozen ongoing insurgencies and 6 million refugees. Fighting in the Caucasus has prompted Iran to set up refugee camps inside Azerbaijan. Armenia faces a second harsh winter, cut off from adequate supplies of food, water and power. Hundreds of thousands are threatened in Georgia and Tajikistan. More than 2 million Afghans and 1 million Iraqi Kurds remain in need. And in Bosnia the war continues and the suffering grows worse.

The quantity of resources available to respond to these emergencies has not kept pace with rising demand. There is a risk of donor fatigue and potentially even donor collapse. Already the gap between needs and responses in many locations is enormous.

All this makes efficiency a matter of much more than bureaucratic interest. Let us never forget that the stakes are not statistics or politics or camera placements and news stories. Rather, what is at stake is life or death for blameless children and grandparents and mothers and fathers. Their fate depends upon our choices. My Government believes that the United Nations system must choose to become more efficient and professional in coordinating its disaster-relief programmes.

The effort to reform United Nations humanitarian programmes extends back at least to the creation of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO) in 1972. UNDRO was supposed to improve coordination, eliminate duplication and put someone clearly in charge. It did not. So two years ago we created a Department of Humanitarian Affairs, with new tools to do the same jobs and more.

Although the Department's efforts have been spread thin by the new wave of humanitarian emergencies, its work has begun to take root. Consolidated appeals have been established. The Central Emergency Revolving Fund has helped speed aid to victims. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee could become an effective coordinating forum for United Nations agencies and humanitarian organizations. The effectiveness of these tools will be enhanced further as the conclusions reached at the Economic and Social Council this past summer are implemented.

As I will describe in greater detail, my Government is prepared to help bolster the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in conjunction with reforms within that Department. We are pleased that Under-Secretary-General Eliasson is taking steps to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the Department, and we fully support him in this effort. We also believe that the Department's capabilities need to be reinforced in three critical areas.

First, the Department must have the recognized leadership role, the authority and the resources to ensure that the United Nations rapid response to emergencies is properly coordinated. The Department must be the party

responsible for system-wide performance in the delivery of humanitarian assistance in complex emergencies.

Secondly, the Department must have a modern information system encompassing all emergency requirements. This includes providing data on assessed needs and tracking the capabilities and contributions of agencies and donors in response to those needs.

The United States already provides funds for the International Emergency Readiness and Response Information System. As part of a joint initiative with Japan, the United States is now prepared to make two new commitments as the Department of Humanitarian Affairs implements its reforms. First, we will give the Department the equipment necessary to establish a modern information network system in New York which can be linked to Geneva and the field. Secondly, we will provide five portable satellite communications earth stations for links with field offices in emergencies. The total value of this new United States contribution exceeds $500,000. We are pleased that the Government of Japan is able to join us in contributing to this critical information function, and we invite others to do so as well.

Thirdly - and finally - the Department needs the resources necessary to coordinate a rapid response by the United Nations to an emergency where insufficient capacity exists in the field. The Department must determine when field deployments are required, including its own when necessary, and must be responsible for seeing that sufficient resources are put in place. Accordingly, we urge that the Department be given access to the interest earned by the Central Emergency Revolving Fund for this purpose until a permanent solution is found.

Let me also mention the role Under-Secretary-General Eliasson has played. He has established a new Department in the midst of an unprecedented increase in humanitarian emergencies. He has worked to help those at risk - whether from drought in southern Africa, from civil violence in the wintry hills of Georgia or from other forms of catastrophe So I am particularly pleased to announce today these new contributions to support the Department.

I would also like to address myself to the United Nations humanitarian agencies, which I hope are represented here today. As I have said, they all have our gratitude for their dedication and extraordinary hard work. However, the United States believes that the Department is not the only part of the United Nations humanitarian system that needs to be strengthened. We urge the United Nations humanitarian agencies to cooperate with the Department and to accept its leadership in coordinating responses to complex emergencies. That may require some loss of customary independence, but it will result in major gains in overall effectiveness.

It is also vital that the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs ensure that the humanitarian dimension is incorporated into the planning and execution of political and peace-keeping missions. The delivery of emergency relief is often among the primary purposes of such a mission. It is both necessary and appropriate, therefore, that the United Nations official responsible for humanitarian affairs be involved in developing and implementing the response. Such an integrated approach should ensure that the peace-keeping, political and humanitarian elements of United Nations operations do not work at cross purposes.

The role of the Secretary-General is also critical. In the end, his leadership will determine whether or not the United Nations system coordinates smoothly in responding to humanitarian crises. We urge him to take up this challenge forcefully.

The Department of Humanitarian Affairs planning effort must also emphasize early intervention. Droughts may be inevitable, but famines resulting from drought are not. Human conflicts are inevitable, but destructive wars resulting from such conflicts are not. Early intervention requires good information, which means United Nations Departments and agencies must pool their data. It requires a willingness on the part of the United Nations to respond quickly and appropriately to threatened emergencies, and it requires decisive leadership both from United Nations officials and from Member States.

Finally, planning for disaster relief must emphasize the continuum between emergency help and development aid. Whenever we respond to an emergency, we should begin preparing for the day when the primary mission changes from relief to recovery. Today there is no better example of this need than Somalia. I myself saw that relief efforts in that country have saved hundreds of thousands of lives. Agricultural lands once ravaged by violence are now under cultivation. Children who seemed to have no future are now returning to school. Basic health needs are being given attention. Somalia is entering the recovery phase.

The test now is whether Somalis are willing and able to take the steps that will make an enduring recovery possible. The conference scheduled for 29 November in Addis Ababa is a key opportunity. If Somali leaders demonstrate their own commitment to peace, which is the prerequisite for development, international donors will respond. If they fail to do so, the space for effective international action will diminish.

The United States is prepared to lead by example. At the Addis Ababa conference, we shall announce an assistance package for Somalia of approximately $100 million in new and programmed funds. These funds will be used for humanitarian assistance and rehabilitation projects in those regions where progress on political reconciliation and security has been made. These funds will be available if, and only if, Somalis make real progress in creating a secure environment and achieving political reconciliation. We urge other donors to participate actively in this effort.

The international relief system is under grave strain. We should respond by strengthening the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and emphasizing the kind of comprehensive approach that complex emergencies demand. We must also work together to overcome the obstacles created by political and military conflict to the delivery of emergency relief.

Although it is sometimes difficult to separate the humanitarian component from other components of a peace-keeping mission, there is a difference. A combatant force may well refuse to cease hostilities, to disarm or to demobilize out of a legitimate concern for survival. But there is nothing legitimate about using force to starve or freeze innocent civilians. There is nothing legitimate about denying medical aid so that children lie screaming as legs are amputated without anaesthesia. There is nothing legitimate about extorting food or other supplies meant for humanitarian relief. There is, in short, nothing legitimate about denying access to the means of human survival.

This issue of access for relief convoys and aircraft will be especially critical in Bosnia this winter. For many it may mean the difference between mere hardship and certain death. The Bosnian people are weaker today than they were last year. Their capacity to endure hardship has been sapped. If fighting continues, the number in need will be far greater and the gravity of their need far more severe than they were last winter.

The international community is responding. The Sarajevo airlift has now gone on longer than the Berlin airlift 45 years ago. Pilots from 20 countries have flown more than 6,000 flights over the course of 500 days. America alone has contributed more than $400 million to the relief effort. The United States Department of Defence has developed a new food ration that is high in nutrition, can survive a 10,000-foot air-drop and requires no water or fuel for preparation. And 80 per cent of the air-drops in Bosnia have been from American planes.

United Nations agencies have made plans for this winter; so have the non-governmental organizations. We are all prepared and preparing to do more. The United States is prepared to make a major contribution to address needs during the coming winter in Bosnia, and we hope this will encourage other donors to make similar contributions. We congratulate Mrs. Ogata on the achievement of an agreement between the parties in Bosnia to ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance by suspending hostilities and allowing free and unconditional access to those in need.

We must strive to convince those of all factions and nations, in the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere, not to interfere with the delivery of emergency aid. One of our great challenges is to establish the principle that the United Nations has an inviolable right to deliver humanitarian relief and that the victims of violence have an equal right to receive it.

In closing, I want to thank the Assembly once again for the opportunity to discuss these issues here today. Because of the very great challenges we face, it is as important as it has ever been that we work together to advance our common goals. Because the need is so great, our efforts, too, must be great. We must rise above institutional jealousies and move beyond the promise of reform to the reality of change. And we must believe that each child fed, each refugee housed and each family reunited will inspire others to join with us in reducing the toll of tragedy in this troubled world.

**Mr. SAMUELSSON** (Sweden): I am pleased to make this statement on behalf of the five Nordic countries - Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

The United Nations has, in one way or another, been involved in the search for solutions to the alarming succession of international crises in recent years. In a rapidly changing world, Member countries have felt the urgent need to develop new instruments to address these crises.

Resolution 46/182, adopted by the General Assembly in 1991, is one of these new tools which the Nordic countries felt was urgently needed. It has provided the United Nations with an overall framework for the international community's coordinated response to complex emergencies and natural disasters.

On the basis of that resolution, important achievements have been made during the last two years. The necessary institutional arrangements have been put into place with the creation of the post of Emergency Relief Coordinator, as well as with the establishment of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and the Inter-Agency

Standing Committee. At the same time, a strengthening of the financial mechanisms has been accomplished with the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF) and the use of consolidated appeals.

Resolution 46/182 also refers to the relationship between the humanitarian and the political activities of the United Nations. It clearly states that the Emergency Relief Coordinator should actively facilitate the access of operational organizations to emergency areas. In accordance with the agreed conclusions reached by the Economic and Social Council this year, the Coordinator should also fully participate in the overall United Nations planning of responses to complex emergencies. By its very nature, this central task requires close cooperation and coordination between the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and other Departments of the United Nations Secretariat. Such active contacts are promoted, *inter alia*, through the existing United Nations interdepartmental task forces.

The experience gained in the former Yugoslavia and in Somalia has shown the close and significant links, in major complex emergencies, between humanitarian assistance and political processes. It has also borne witness to the central principle that humanitarian efforts must always be guided by humanitarian needs. It is essential that full support be given at the highest levels in the United Nations to the Emergency Relief Coordinator as a focal point and advocate in ensuring that the humanitarian dimension, particularly the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality of relief assistance, are fully taken into account.

The task now facing the United Nations is to make full use of the instruments at hand to address the challenges posed by complex emergencies and natural disasters. The further strengthening of these mechanisms must also be part of a continuous effort to improve the efficiency of the work of the United Nations. Reinforcing the United Nations in this area is a task not only for the Secretary-General and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs: United Nations agencies must take full responsibility for this process and ensure at all levels of these agencies that coordination with other relevant bodies is sought and achieved. The wholehearted commitment of donor and recipient countries and of participating non-governmental organizations is also indispensable.

The agreed conclusions of this summer's session of the Economic and Social Council give compelling guidance for the enhancement of the United Nations response to emergencies. They are fully in line with the position of the Nordic countries and should be thoroughly implemented. As stated in the agreed conclusions, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee should function as the primary mechanism for the coordination of policies related to humanitarian assistance among agencies and for the formulation of coherent and effective responses to complex emergencies.

The Economic and Social Council's conclusions also established that coordination should be field-oriented. In this context, the role of the United Nations Resident Coordinator is crucial, as stated in General Assembly resolutions 46/182 and 47/199. While the Department of Humanitarian Affairs does not and should not have its own operational capacity in the field, it must be able to rely on the operational agencies of the United Nations and other partners represented in the field. As past experience has shown, notably in Africa, it is often necessary to strengthen considerably and modify the institutional structure of the United Nations in countries affected by complex emergencies. In such circumstances, it is imperative that the organizational and reporting arrangements be clearly defined, as well as the responsibility and accountability of each participant. Further improvements in this regard are called for.

At the session of the Economic and Social Council, it was also stressed that efforts must be intensified to promote preparedness, capacity-building and contingency planning for humanitarian emergencies.

Disaster-mitigation measures should be built into development programmes as an integral part of the continuum from disaster to rehabilitation. Preventing disasters, as well as reducing their impact and adverse consequences, is an efficient and cost-effective way of responding to the devastation that threatens to occur in emergencies.

In a situation of rapidly increasing numbers of humanitarian crises, increased attention must be paid to the financing of relief operations. The financing instruments created by resolution 46/182, the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF) and the consolidated appeals, must be used more effectively to support relief operations. Measures to make more funds available in the CERF should be based on an evaluation of its present functioning and projected requirements. The steps which are needed - in order at least to increase the turnover velocity of the Fund - include swifter donor response to consolidated appeals and prompt reimbursement by the agencies. It is essential to safeguard the revolving nature of the CERF.

***Mr. Gujral (India), Vice-President, took the Chair.***

As regards the consolidated appeals, it should be borne in mind that they are much more than just a

financial mechanism. These appeals should primarily be a result of inter-agency programming, with decisions on priorities between different activities, and should serve as the instrument for coordination between the recipient country and the United Nations agencies as well as being a mechanism for reporting to donors. The consolidated appeals have been improved considerably over the last year. However, it is crucial that the principles adopted by the Economic and Social Council be implemented, particularly as regards preparing the appeals in the field, their selective use in complex emergencies, a comprehensive and realistic assessment of relief requirements, the establishment of realistic priorities, and the consistency of relief strategies with longer-term development requirements, including the addressing of root causes. The consolidated appeals should also contain information on coordination arrangements and on the use of the CERF.

The importance Member States attach to the issue of humanitarian emergency assistance and the responsibilities and tasks of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs should be adequately reflected in the biannual programme budget. The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs must be given flexibility to organize the Department in all aspects, including reallocation of personnel, in the most efficient way. It is of overall importance that the Coordinator be able to select his staff with a view to ensuring competent leadership at all levels of the Department.

The safety and security of relief personnel are of deep concern to the Nordic countries. Conditions and actions that endanger the delivery of humanitarian assistance and put the security of international staff and other relief workers at peril constitute despicable violations of fundamental principles of international law and must be strongly condemned.

Access for humanitarian relief and questions related to mine clearance, the internally displaced and the demobilization of soldiers are of paramount importance in the context of addressing complex emergencies. It is now high time that these issues were decided upon through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee structure and that the agreed solutions were swiftly implemented.

Finally, the Nordic countries have been among the strongest supporters and advocates of a United Nations that has been strengthened in order better to respond to humanitarian emergencies. We have seen the progress made in this field as an integral part of the overall effort of invigorating the social and economic sector of the United Nations. However, what has been done so far is not enough. In spite of achievements, the United Nations system in the delivery of humanitarian emergency assistance does not function satisfactorily. All concerned parts of the United Nations system need to demonstrate a stronger commitment to addressing the problems and urgent tasks in this field. The clear and reiterated requests from Member States to the United Nations must be translated into decisive and rapid action in order to make the structures which have been put in place work as intended. With that in mind, the Nordic countries urge the United Nations - the Secretariat and the operational agencies involved in humanitarian emergency assistance - to take all necessary steps to implement without delay the agreed conclusions from this summer's session of the Economic and Social Council. The victims of natural disasters and complex emergencies cannot wait any longer for the United Nations to get its house in order.

***Mr. KHARAZZI*** (Islamic Republic of Iran): I should like to begin by expressing my appreciation to the Secretary-General and to the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs for their tireless efforts in mobilizing international assistance for the victims of natural disasters and other emergencies.

Despite enormous technological advances, people still find themselves at the mercy of nature. Every year earthquakes, floods, hurricanes and other natural disasters ravage homes and leave behind terrible destruction. The 108 cases of major natural disasters documented since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 46/182 are an astonishing number.

At the same time, the end of the cold war has resulted in the emergence of many new nations as well as in the collapse of governmental structures in some countries. Consequently, war and civil strife have entailed much loss of life and property throughout the globe. These new developments, which necessitate a more active United Nations involvement, have in turn expanded the mandate and scope of United Nations humanitarian operations. In this respect, it is worth mentioning that in the past two years the international community has witnessed 26 complex emergencies.

With this unpredictable rise in the number of natural disasters and complex emergencies, the United Nations is faced with emerging challenges in the implementation of its humanitarian role. Yet the system cannot play its crucial role of providing early warning, assessing needs, preparing appeals and implementing relief activities unless it is well equipped with the essential means, which include financial and material resources as well as qualified personnel.

The availability of adequate financial resources is critical in ensuring the success of the system's rapid and coordinated response to natural disasters and other emergencies. In this context, the Central Emergency Revolving Fund has, since its establishment in May 1992, contributed effectively to the alleviation of the suffering of the victims of emergencies. Given its advantages, the Fund is being increasingly utilized by United Nations operational organizations to meet urgent relief requirements. In view of the frequency of its use - on 17 occasions - as well as our intention to expand its scope to include other international organizations, serious thought should be given to a possible increase in the size of the Fund.

The current time-lag between pledges to consolidated appeals and actual contributions is yet another argument in support of our position that the size of the Fund should be increased. In this respect, we support the agreement reached at the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council to consider increasing the size of the Fund. However, that does not weaken our advocacy of the proposal with regard to quick reimbursements of resources withdrawn by operational organizations. In other words, we believe that, in addition to an increase in the size of the Fund, donor countries should be encouraged to respond more quickly to the consolidated appeals launched by the operational organizations in order to maintain the smooth functioning of the Fund. Furthermore, to expedite the entire process of emergency assistance there is a need for more flexibility in utilization of the Fund.

The fact that only 56 per cent of the requirements of the appeals launched to date have been met makes it necessary - as the Secretary-General has proposed - to review the current funding mechanisms and explore improved resource-mobilization strategies for humanitarian assistance programmes. Another critical problem is lack of enthusiasm among donor countries to fund non-food aid requirements, a point that has obstructed the coherent implementation of humanitarian assistance programmes.

In view of the demanding tasks entrusted to it, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs should also be provided with qualified personnel and administrative resources. In our opinion, General Assembly resolution 47/168 has already provided a legislative framework for action. Unfortunately, despite benefiting from the secondment of staff by operational organizations in the system, national agencies and non-governmental organizations, the Department still lacks the required human and administrative resources to discharge its responsibilities. Moreover, 65 per cent of the Department's staff are funded from extrabudgetary resources, thus making it necessary to look to other possibilities for financing its costs.

Improvement of the existing stand-by capacity mechanisms is a key element in rapid response to disasters and emergencies. Recognizing the potential contribution of regional stand-by capacities to effective relief operations, resolution 47/168 requested the Secretary-General to explore the possibilities and advantages of the establishment of regional warehouses. Regrettably, that request has not received due consideration in the Secretary-General's report; there is only a very general reference to the question of emergency stockpiles at national, regional and global levels, in paragraph 42. In order to have a clear picture of various ways and means of improving the current stand-by capacity mechanisms, the Secretary-General's next report to the General Assembly should contain, *inter alia*, the following items: a survey of existing facilities for storage of relief items at regional and global levels; recommendations on how to improve the existing facilities; measures to make available to Member States a list of the most frequently used disaster items in emergency situations; an analysis of the advantages of establishing regional warehouses, including promptness and cost-effectiveness; and an analysis of regional warehouses possibly complementing existing facilities at the global level.

At the same time, we support the efforts of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in preparing operational guidelines for the use of military and civil defence assets to deliver relief assistance following large-scale national disasters.

The destruction caused by disasters is often tremendous. Given their vulnerability and limited disaster-prevention abilities, most developing countries may find that a natural or man-made disaster costs decades of investment and development activities. Nevertheless, some disasters can be prevented, or their adverse consequences may be controlled. Thus our focus on the provision of relief to the affected countries should not divert attention from work on disaster-mitigation programmes, which in most cases are highly cost-effective.

We share the Secretary-General's view that in order to minimize effectively the adverse effects of disasters, mitigation strategies should be incorporated into development programmes. Recognizing the importance of disaster prevention, the General Assembly, in resolution 46/182, called for the provision of sufficient and readily available resources and for the strengthening of the mitigation capacities of disaster-prone countries.

With the escalating number of complex emergencies, international attention has been shifting from sudden-onset natural disasters. What worries us is that the response to such complex emergencies could be at the expense of the response to natural disasters. Therefore, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs should continue to address natural disasters with the same sensitivity.

Another vital consideration in the provision of relief services is that often a few days after the occurrence of a disaster the emergency situation becomes less immediate. Survivors are found and are temporarily resettled, and this is misconstrued as the end of the emergency. But the most important tasks remain. They include the restoration of basic services, such as schools and health care, and the reconstruction of damaged property, all of which require additional resources. Meanwhile, in many cases the human suffering continues after the relief process has ended. Accordingly, international support must be structured in such a way as to expedite the process of rehabilitation and reconstruction in the affected areas.

While we commend the efforts of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in ensuring active participation by the World Bank in the preparation of consolidated appeals, we feel that there is room for more involvement by the Bank in the provision of continuum-form relief support for development. In this context, we welcome the decision by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee at its meeting in July this year to establish a task force to formulate policy recommendations concerning the continuum and to invite relevant development organizations of the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions to participate in this endeavour.

The World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, to be held in Yokohama, Japan, will provide us with an opportunity to review thoroughly, in the light of recent developments, the activities undertaken at the national, regional and global levels, in line with the objectives of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. We hope that the Conference, while promoting the cause of humanitarian assistance, will contribute to the international efforts to curb the adverse consequences of natural disasters.

I should like to say in conclusion that the success of humanitarian operations largely depends on respecting the guiding principles in resolution 46/182. In this regard, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States must be fully respected. At the same time, the system should ensure the neutrality and impartiality of emergency assistance, as any attempt to politicize the delivery of assistance to the victims of a disaster might well lead to the failure of the entire operation.

***Mr. LAVROV*** (Russian Federation) *(interpretation from Russian):* As the world faces new emergencies, the responsibility of the United Nations for the mobilization and coordination of concerted multilateral action to provide urgent humanitarian assistance is increasing. The experience of recent years has shown convincingly that timely and adequate emergency assistance is very helpful in the context of the wider efforts to solve military and political conflicts and to secure economic reconstruction and development.

The Organization carries out its humanitarian affairs work at different levels - in the Security Council, in the General Assembly and in the Economic and Social Council, as well as through intergovernmental organizations directly involved in humanitarian emergency assistance. The delegation of the Russian Federation welcomes the active participation in these activities of non-governmental organizations, a number of which carry a heavy burden.

The situation I have described is proof of the complex, system-wide nature of the tasks confronting the Organization in the field of humanitarian assistance and the need for additional efforts to strengthen coordination on the basis of resolution 46/182, and particularly, its guidelines.

The agreed conclusions approved by the Economic and Social Council in July 1993, following discussion of the coordination of humanitarian assistance, were a step forward. We should like to highlight in particular the Council's conclusions concerning the need to ensure that the Secretary-General has a leading role in strengthening the coordination of work at the field level, strengthening the role of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and establishing a general framework for action to ensure an effective transition from preventive aid to economic reconstruction and development. These agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council should be accepted for implementation by all the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system.

The Secretary-General's report (A/48/536) contains useful information and well-founded proposals on measures to improve United Nations activities in the provision of humanitarian emergency assistance. We note with satisfaction that in the relatively short period of a year and a half the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, headed by Under-Secretary-General Eliasson, has done much to improve coordination within the United Nations system. We call on the Department to continue its efforts in this direction, thus ensuring a harmonized combination of its coordinating role with the practical operational capabilities of the organizations and specialized agencies.

The Russian Federation's State Committee on Emergency Situations has been cooperating closely with the Department in carrying out humanitarian operations in countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the former Yugoslavia and other hot spots.

We welcome the measures that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs is taking to strengthen the potential of the United Nations to react rapidly to sudden-onset emergencies. To be more precise, we should like to highlight such measures as the establishment of the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) Stand-by Team, the efforts to establish a Central Register of Disaster Management Capacities, the Secretary-General's appointment, in the case of a number of emergencies, of special country coordinators and the creation of the field-level Disaster Management Teams.

In our view, the following urgent steps could help to increase the effectiveness of humanitarian emergency assistance: a more active use of the capabilities of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to strengthen a single, agreed approach to humanitarian operations of agencies of the United Nations system, under the leadership, and with the coordinating role, of the Secretary-General; the streamlining of the system of financing humanitarian operations in the field, in particular at the initial stages of their implementation; the strengthening of measures aimed at ensuring the security of staff participating in humanitarian operations through concerted efforts of the organizations of the United Nations system and the authorities of the host countries; and increased attention to the most vulnerable groups of the population when humanitarian situations are worsened in countries against which Security Council sanctions are applied.

We support the idea of strengthening the system of early warning of emergencies - not only of natural disasters, but also of other cataclysmic events which cause humanitarian crises. Here we see substantial potential for interaction between different units of the Secretariat, the specialized agencies of the United Nations system, the Bretton Woods institutions, non-governmental organizations, and the science and business communities. In essence, what we are talking about is a further enhancement of the legal and practical development of humanitarian diplomacy.

We should add that timely humanitarian emergency assistance not only helps to mitigate humanitarian crises but also promotes a rapid transition to economic reconstruction and development. There is a need for an expeditious elaboration of measures to improve interaction between the agencies of the United Nations system in order to ensure an effective transition from emergency relief to the carrying out of the tasks of reconstruction and development. It is clear that the mandates and comparative advantages of the different organizations and agencies must be fully taken into account.

The Russian delegation hopes that the problems of reconstruction and development will be duly reflected in the agenda for development now under preparation by the Secretary-General.

***Mr. YAVORISKY*** (Ukraine) *(spoke in Ukrainian; interpretation from Russian; text furnished by the delegation):* Clearly it will come as no surprise to anyone that I, as the representative of the Ukraine, in speaking to the agenda item "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations", will speak mainly of Chernobyl.

Seven and a half years after the first and, thank God, the only explosion of a nuclear reactor in the history of mankind - the one at Chernobyl, which emitted radioactivity of 50 million curies into the environment - the disaster has become somewhat historically distant for the world. After all, there have been several immense earthquakes since then, and other tragedies: the Persian Gulf, the Yugoslav tragedy, which continues still, and drought in Somalia. It would seem that we have stopped being surprised by the tragedies that are carrying off thousands of our fellow human beings around the world.

It is hardly worth competing as to whose tragedy is worst. All of them constitute our common loss. Yet the Chernobyl disaster - and we in the Ukraine, with increasing terror, feel it - has expanded in time and space. It lurks in the slow relentless death of those who crossed the 30 kilometre zone of hell between 1986 and 1989 - the immediate liquidators of the danger hidden in the fourth block - and those who have been affected by the Chernobyl radiation, and it also lurks in the generations to come. It has reached even the genetic code of the nation.

A sociological survey of school children evacuated from Pripyat, a town of 50,000 atomic workers, showed that 92 per cent of those surveyed had a psychological complex, believing there was no future.

In the Ukrainian Parliament I was the head of an interim commission to investigate the causes of the Chernobyl disaster. We all came to the conclusion that the main culprit of the 1986 tragedy was the totalitarian communist system - a system of lies, of secrecy and of lawlessness. Nuclear power in the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, was an offshoot, a bastard, of a military State with a militarized economy. The Chernobyl nuclear power station, all its blocks, defective in design,

worked for the atomic armament of the former USSR, producing plutonium.

We must do everything to ensure that the world remains convinced that non-democratic, totalitarian regimes should not exploit the risky attainments of civilization.

We know that in 1986 all Members of the United Nations strove to help us, but their humanitarian, technical and moral assistance was tactlessly ignored, not by the peoples of the Ukraine, Belarus and Russia but by the political leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. We are still paying most dearly; we are paying in human lives.

The world shuddered when it learned about Chernobyl, and learned that 100 kilometres from the reactor, in Kiev, our lightly clothed children - my daughter, a first-grader, was among them - were marching in May Day processions. Today we can assert with full conviction that Chernobyl was one of the detonators that brought about the downfall of totalitarianism in the USSR and of the Soviet Union itself. We can also assert that even if the communist empire had not fallen apart in 1991 it would still have not been able to resolve even one of the many Chernobyl problems. It was no longer capable of doing that, economically, scientifically, technically or morally.

Belarus, Russia and the Ukraine are sovereign States. They were not born from sea foam, like Venus, but they have risen from the ashes like a Phoenix. For that reason all of us today bear the birthmarks of that system. To get rid of them is extremely difficult. It requires time. Seventy years of false communism, of fear, of the suppression of initiative, of thought, of civil freedoms, are slowly disappearing from the thoughts and souls of the Ukrainian people. Next March we will be conducting new parliamentary elections finally on a multiparty system and I, as the Chairman of the Democratic Party of the Ukraine, am convinced that there will follow political and economic reforms that will enable Ukraine to set out on the road of a market economy and democracy.

All that will be tomorrow. Ukrainian society is already ripe to ensure that this will be its choice tomorrow. But if we do not at least mitigate the consequences of Chernobyl today, tomorrow may never come, because the Chernobyl catastrophe is not only our yesterday or today; it is also our tomorrow and will be so for many decades to come.

The Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Eliasson, who was awarded the Chernobyl Cross of Honour by the Ukrainian Parliament and Government, has said that in 1986, when he was in his own country after the Chernobyl rain, he saw farmers destroying contaminated milk. That was in faraway Sweden. Yet we and our children have been drinking contaminated milk, because what is being produced in the non-contaminated zones of the Ukraine is not enough even for the children. In Ukraine 7.4 million hectares of the best soil in the world have been contaminated with more than 0.1 curie of radiation per square kilometre.

Even a strong and economically flourishing State could not deal alone with the consequences of a catastrophe like Chernobyl, so imagine the situation for the moribund post-communist economy of Ukraine, where 20 per cent of our meagre national budget is now eaten up by Chernobyl. And the limited funds allocated for Chernobyl for the year had been exhausted by October. Thousands of adults and children will not be able to move to permanent housing in uncontaminated areas. The shortage of medicine and ecologically pure produce will grow worse, and the families of the liquidators of the Chernobyl disaster will be virtually without social services.

Last May, Mr. Jan Eliasson visited Ukraine, including the Chernobyl area the site of the tragedy. He saw the heart-rending, dead, depopulated city that had housed the plant workers, to which it will be hardly possible to return for centuries. In the 30-kilometre zone, he saw abandoned villages, mutated forests, millions of tonnes of radioactive mud. But he simply did not have enough time to look into the eyes of the thousands of children suffering from leukaemia or thyroid cancer, or into the eyes of helpless physicians: we lack even one specialized clinic to save the victims. And even the most piercing eye would be unable to discern the hidden danger lurking in the Dnieper river, which provides drinking water for 32 million people in Ukraine, or in the fields and meadows and the Polessye bogs that have been contaminated by radionucleids.

We appreciate that, having obtained its independence, Ukraine joined the world community not as a rich country, ready to provide generous assistance to others. For the time being, we need assistance ourselves, and that is the bitter truth. We have turned in our anguish to the United Nations, that world-wide institution of mutual understanding among the peoples of the world, an organization of which we were among the founding Members.

The United Nations wields great authority in the Ukraine, particularly with respect to resolving the Chernobyl problem. First of all, the United Nations has not allowed Chernobyl to fade into the past or to become a second-rate example of "yesterday's" ills of mankind. Many specialists, from many countries and international organizations, have come to our country. They have

assessed our losses; they have determined the extent of the damage in the affected areas; they have mapped out measures for solving certain problems. Medical equipment and medicine has come to our country; children from affected areas have been brought to other lands for rest and treatment.

I take this opportunity on behalf of my delegation to reiterate our sincere gratitude to all the countries, international governmental and non-governmental organizations and scientific and business circles in many countries: to all those who have come to help us in our time of travail.

We are grateful for the humanitarian assistance in the form of ecologically pure products from countries including the United States of America, Germany, France, Austria, Italy, Canada and others. The Government of Germany has provided, as humanitarian assistance, a great deal of technology and clothing for the affected regions and to support Ukrainian agriculture. This has served, first and foremost, as moral support for our people at a very difficult moment in its history: help at a time of true need is doubly valuable.

This, of course, does not resolve even a small fraction of our current problems. We understand that letting Ukraine grow into a rich, strong democratic State at the very epicentre of Europe is something that only we 52 million peace-loving, hardworking people in Ukraine can do. We have a third of the world's finest black earth; we have vast mineral deposits; we have an enormous raw-materials base; we have potential fuel and energy resources. Soon, wise economic reforms will be carried out, including privatization: 90 per cent of the economy remains a weight around the neck of our young State. In that connection, I would note that the majority of the State sector is bankrupt.

But there is not much time left for Chernobyl and its victims. Today they can still be saved, if the world community helps us with medical equipment and medicine, with diagnostic and treatment medication, and with cardiovascular and cancer medicine. Rather than constantly sending us medicine and disposable syringes, it would be wiser to transfer, permanently and on a mutually advantageous basis, the technological equipment for the production of these things. We are ready to cooperate in such an endeavour; we can guarantee in law the protection of foreign capital.

I should like to stress that the United Nations resolution on this question must leave Chernobyl at the focus of the international community's attention. The United Nations must remain the catalyst and unquenchable beacon for Chernobyl. If this problem is forgotten and shifted to a regional, European level and then perhaps to the Eastern European level - and later even to the level of the Commonwealth of Independent States - we will lose yet another portion of our faith in human solidarity. At a time when the United Nations is enjoying a renaissance, and when the last totalitarian empires and regimes are collapsing, if part of the rich countries' vast expenditures on armaments against yesterday's militaristic USSR were used to eliminate the consequences of the Chernobyl catastrophe, we would all gain, and democracy in the world most of all.

On the conceptual level, the Ukrainian delegation wants to reaffirm its commitment to basic principles for the provision of humanitarian assistance through the United Nations, as set out in resolution 46/182; these include respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of the country or countries to which assistance is provided, humanitarianism, neutrality and impartiality. In particular, by applying these principles, the humanitarian aspect must be taken into account in peacemaking and peace-keeping operations.

We fully share the Secretary-General's conclusion in his report that emergency assistance, reconstruction and development should be viewed as a continuum, and that emergency-assistance operations should not obscure the longer-term process of development and should not lead to a syndrome of dependency among the recipients. Other guidelines for the design of programmes and strategies for this continuum, as set out in paragraph 133 of document A/48/536, deserve support.

We believe that the conceptual basis of United Nations provision of humanitarian assistance will be further developed at the forthcoming World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction.

Of late, the attention of the world community has been increasingly focused on the need to protect United Nations staff as it carries out humanitarian operations. We agree with other delegations about the importance of securing legal protection for United Nations staff, and we believe it necessary to prepare and adopt an international convention to define the status of United Nations peace-keeping personnel and establish a machinery for protecting it at every stage of an operation. We are prepared to be among the sponsors of such a document.

I have one more thing to say. Before the Assembly stands a man who battled with all his forces in the Ukrainian Parliament for the decommissioning of the Chernobyl atomic power station, which is a wounded beast and therefore extremely dangerous. The decision to keep

it in operation was adopted by a mere two-vote majority, and that was only because a cold winter lies ahead, with a difficult energy crisis. But I am convinced that a new Parliament, to be elected in March next year by the people of independent Ukraine, will take the decision to shut it down once and for all.

Yesterday the Supreme Rada of the Ukraine, with 254 votes in favour and nine abstentions, ratified the START I Treaty and the Lisbon Protocol to that Treaty. The Parliament of the Ukraine took this historic step in spite of the fact that our expectations of receiving reliable guarantees for the security of the Ukraine were in vain; that the promises of assistance in nuclear disarmament cannot be regarded as adequate to meet our needs; and that the problems of compensation for the thousands of warheads of the tactical nuclear weapons handed over to Russia for destruction have not yet been resolved.

For this reason the Parliament entrusted the President with the holding of discussions on these questions, and only after their positive resolution will the exchange of letters of ratification take place. The Parliament asked the President to work out a time-frame for the liquidation of the armaments scheduled for reduction under the agreement and to ensure monitoring of its implementation. After these conditions, as set out in the reservations, have been met, the ratification letters will be exchanged.

The Parliament has stated quite clearly that Ukraine is ready to speed up the process of eliminating nuclear armaments in its territory if its legitimate security interests are taken into account. With the entry into force and implementation of the START agreement, the way is open for the resolution by the Supreme Rada of the question of the Ukraine's accession to the Treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

We would like to thank the Assembly for having understood our pain and our problems, and for the fact that it will vote unanimously in favour of a draft resolution that will ensure that the Chernobyl bells will not fall silent in the world. They not only toll for the dead, but also call to the conscience of the living. As long as we hear those bells we belong to mankind.

**Mr. KABIR** (Bangladesh): I am very happy to have the opportunity to speak on this important agenda item. I would like to express my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for a very useful report (A/48/536) on it.

The recent dramatic increase in natural and man-made disasters and civil and ethnic strife has made an effective and coordinated response by the international community absolutely essential. Bangladesh believes that provision of humanitarian assistance in an adequate and timely manner can create a positive environment for improving security conditions and can provide an opportunity to address underlying problems. An appropriate and prompt response to emergency situations is crucial to assist victims, reduce tension and create a climate conducive to the resolution of the underlying political problems.

Natural disasters and other emergencies put additional pressure on the economies of developing countries that are suffering from the chronic problems of poverty and underdevelopment. We strongly feel that humanitarian assistance should address the root causes of emergencies. Otherwise, recurrence of emergencies cannot be prevented and States will not be able to grow out of what we call the relief dependency syndrome. It is therefore very important that transition from relief to rehabilitation and long-term sustainable development programmes be ensured.

The interrelationship between humanitarian activities and those relating to peacemaking and peace-keeping is well recognized today. Delivery of humanitarian assistance has indeed become a vital part of United Nations peacemaking and peace-keeping endeavours. This was also highlighted by the speakers at a recent Conference on Conflict and Humanitarian Action, held at Princeton University and jointly organized by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Peace Academy and Princeton University. My delegation hopes that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs will work in close cooperation with the Department of Peace-keeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs in formulating the United Nations humanitarian response to complex emergency situations.

Bangladesh believes that humanitarian diplomacy, as it has been conceptualized and as it is being carried out by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, forms an important part of preventive diplomacy. In this regard, Bangladesh deeply appreciates the efforts of the Secretary-General in sending Under-Secretary-General Jan Eliasson as his Special Representative to Bangladesh and Myanmar to assist in the repatriation of Myanmar refugees from Bangladesh.

The recent increase in the number of natural disasters and the consequent damage caused to the economies of the countries concerned need the urgent attention of the international community. The vulnerability of the developing countries to natural disaster and its recurrence in those countries is a matter of great concern. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs has a special responsibility in this regard. Developing countries suffer more, and the damage to their economies is greater, because of their weaker infrastructures and low capacity to

respond immediately and effectively to disaster situations. International solidarity is therefore essential to reduce the consequences of natural calamities in the developing countries.

I fully agree with the view of the Secretary General, as expressed in his report, that in many cases population pressures and poverty have led people to live in areas already exposed to natural and man-made hazards. Therefore, the broader problems of poverty, pollution, population and so forth should be addressed in order to prevent and limit the consequences of such diasters. I also fully agree with the Secretary-General that:

> "mitigation measures should be built into development programmes and be an integral part of the continuum from disaster to rehabilitation. Disaster-prone countries must at the same time be provided with the necessary resources to strengthen their mitigation capacities." *(A/48/536, para. 20)*

The collection and dissemination of information and the early warning systems of the United Nations for natural disasters must be further strengthened. It should be noted that the impact of natural disasters are felt most during the first two or three days. Any delay in reaching the affected people may cause thousands of deaths. Therefore, the prompt dispatch of the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Stand-by Team and the provision of the necessary resources are crucial.

My delegation would like to commend the Geneva Office of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs on its work in the field of natural-disaster relief assistance. The United Nations can help disaster-prone countries in developing disaster-mitigation programmes and early-warning systems. There is a need to enhance the indigenous capacity of Member States to face natural disasters effectively. The joint Department of Humanitarian Affairs-United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Disaster Management Training Programme for disaster-prone developing countries is a positive step in this direction.

We also welcome the Department's initiatives to improve disaster preparedness by setting up a Central Register of Disaster Management Capacities. Bangladesh would be happy to share its own experience in handling natural disasters with disaster-prone countries or United Nations agencies.

Bangladesh feels that the designation of the 1990s as the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction is a timely and laudable initiative of the United Nations to promote awareness of the importance of disaster reduction. We feel that sustained efforts should be made to support a strengthening of the capacities of vulnerable countries and to promote the transfer of technology and information exchange. Research in this field and training for personnel from the developing countries should also be strengthened with a view to making the Decade a success.

Security of humanitarian personnel should receive adequate attention from us. The task of humanitarian relief personnel in many areas of the world has become increasingly difficult in recent months. Some personnel have even lost their lives in carrying out their missions. Appropriate measures should be taken to ensure the safety and security of personnel engaged in humanitarian relief work all over the world. Bangladesh would support any effort in that direction.

Bangladesh feels that coordination of United Nations emergency relief assistance can be more effective if it is harmonized with national relief efforts by taking into account national needs and priorities. This could be ensured through the proper integration of United Nations relief operations with those mounted by national authorities. National experiences and capacities should be taken fully into account in dealing with special and recurrent emergencies. United Nations field agencies should work in close cooperation with national agencies.

We are glad to learn that since its creation the Central Emergency Revolving Fund has been used in a number of emergency situations with very positive results. With increasing demands on the Fund as a result of the proliferation of crises and with a certain delay in replenishing it, we feel that there is a need to review its size. Steps should be taken to ensure prompt action to help people requiring immediate assistance. Bangladesh feels that attempts to expand the scope of the Fund should be commensurate with efforts to increase its size.

In conclusion, I should like to reiterate that, in providing humanitarian assistance, the United Nations should be guided by the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality. We believe that the United Nations is best equipped to play the central role in providing and coordinating humanitarian assistance to the affected regions of the world. Bangladesh will extend all support and cooperation to the efforts of the United Nations in strengthening the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance.

***The PRESIDENT:*** In accordance with General Assembly resolution 45/6 of 16 October 1990, I now call upon the Observer of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

*Mr. SANDOZ* (International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)) *(interpretation from French):* The International Committee of the Red Cross is pleased to have the opportunity today to share with the Assembly some of its thoughts on the subject of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance, so as to promote better understanding of the role currently being played by the ICRC.

As far as armed conflicts are concerned, the international environment is nowadays characterized by a growing number of nationalistic, ethnic and religious conflicts, which often take place in a context of great deprivation. The existing structures are deteriorating or even collapsing, making it extremely difficult to identify chains of command and to conclude agreements with parties that are capable of imposing them on the combatants of whom they are supposed to be in charge. As a result, humanitarian emergency activities are becoming more and more complex and dangerous.

Despite these difficulties and the immensity of the task, the number of humanitarian agencies has fortunately increased, and the United Nations has considerably increased its involvement in emergency humanitarian aid.

The magnitude of the needs and the enormous logistic and security problems involved in meeting them have made it more than ever necessary to combine our efforts and work together as closely as possible. This requires not only closer cooperation between the humanitarian agencies themselves, but also more consultation between those agencies and those responsible for keeping or restoring peace. The interaction of the political and military activities of the United Nations, on the one hand, and its humanitarian activities, on the other, does sometimes lead to confusion; this should be carefully examined.

Working towards a clarification of roles and improved mutual understanding through an ongoing process of consultation should make it possible to increase the effectiveness of humanitarian emergency activities in terms both of quality and of quantity. The point is, in fact, not only to avoid duplication of effort, but also to enable each agency concerned to carry out its own mandate as well as it can. In this respect, the existing consultation mechanisms are useful and could probably be further improved.

I should like to refer briefly to these mechanisms in order to make the ICRC position clear.

While not losing sight of what it is - and what we have in mind here is not the ICRC's individuality, but, rather, constructive complementarity - the ICRC intends to pursue and even step up its cooperation, in which it is already broadly involved, with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. The procedures for consultation should, however, remain flexible so as not to impede rapid decision-making in emergencies.

In the field, the ICRC believes that, from now on, the ongoing dialogue between its delegates and United Nations evaluation missions should be put on a systematic footing, with a view to strengthening consultation and promoting greater openness in our operational approaches.

We should also like to point out that cooperation between the ICRC and the United Nations is now almost automatic in the preparation of the consolidated appeals launched by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

If this concerted approach is to be strengthened, we must pursue and develop dialogue and cooperation in various important areas on which joint consideration has already begun. This view is shared by the national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies and by their International Federation.

I now turn to the basic principles of this cooperation, beginning with mention of the preparation of a code of conduct for organizations taking part in disaster relief operations, which was drafted by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, together with the ICRC and in consultation with various non-governmental organizations. This code was recently approved by the Movement's Council of Delegates at a meeting in Birmingham. The code's ethical and operational principles should help consolidate the foundations for joint action by all humanitarian bodies and thereby preserve the neutrality and impartiality which are essential to the credibility of humanitarian action.

Next I should like to touch on the efforts made world wide by the national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies in preventing disasters and in preparing for their consequences. These efforts are of course part of a global coordination by the international community.

The Economic and Social Council this year focused its attention on the problem of ensuring a smooth transition, or "continuum", as it is known, from the emergency phase of assistance programmes to the reconstruction phase. The ICRC, anxious not to create a dependency situation extending beyond the emergency phase, has adopted a comprehensive operational approach in assisting and protecting civilian populations. This approach provides a wide range of specialized services aimed at alleviating all the different types of suffering afflicting those peoples; such services include tracing missing persons, arranging for

the exchange of family messages, medical assistance, sanitation projects, managing prosthesis workshops, distributing seed and livestock vaccination programmes. The ICRC is therefore participating with great interest in various working groups which are tackling this major issue, both in the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and within the framework of the United Nations Development Programme.

We should also like to commend the efforts currently being made to deal on a global basis with the problem of land mines and the particularly terrible human suffering they cause. We hope that they will result in a less compartmentalized strategy with respect to restricting or banning such weapons as well as to the fields of disarmament, mine-clearance, war surgery, and physical, psychological and social rehabilitation. The ICRC is very directly concerned by this issue. Its surgeons deal daily with the horrible wounds inflicted on children, its orthopaedists provide artificial limbs and re-education for their recipients, and its representatives comfort and assist the family members of the victims. That is why earlier this year the ICRC organized in Montreux, Switzerland, a multidisciplinary symposium of experts and it intends to pursue consultations on the matter through January 1994. We mus. continue to mobilize the international community.

We should also like to mention the vital importance of dialogue and of the clear allocation of tasks in order to deal more effectively with the plight of displaced people, who now total about 25 million world wide. Their rights in situations of armed conflict must be observed. Like the civilian population in general, they are entitled to protection. In other cases, their legal status must be clarified. But, it is most important that in all these cases cooperation and coordination and, above all, humanitarian action be strengthened.

Finally, the ICRC is following closely the study now being carried out on the security of personnel of the United Nations and of non-governmental organizations working in the field, on whom the provision of humanitarian assistance often depends. The use of armed escorts must continue to be an exceptional measure and cannot be considered a permanent solution. It is therefore essential that the emblems that protect emergency humanitarian operations, in particular those of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent, be universally respected. For this, humanitarian endeavours must project a clear image of independence, of impartiality towards all victims and of neutrality towards all combatants.

But what can be done when every means available to humanitarian diplomacy has failed? The major crises of recent years have shown that the rejection of all humanitarian principles constitutes a threat to international peace and security. Therefore, States must act in accordance with Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. Against this background, the ICRC must remain vigilant as to the possible impact on humanitarian work of political measures ranging from peace-keeping operations to those intended to restore peace, which impose much greater constraints.

The ICRC fully understands the reasons underlying an approach which seeks to combine all efforts to foster peace. However, it is convinced that there must be a special place for what is required by the logic of humanity, for victims must be aided without delay, regardless of political considerations. Suffering cannot wait. Emergency relief has a logic of its own, independent of all other factors and enshrined in the universally recognized rules of international humanitarian law.

Similarly, it is important to draw a distinction between the political responsibilities of States and the responsibilities attached to humanitarian activities conducted by neutral and impartial agencies. Indeed, there are two quite separate functions here: one is that of the police and the judiciary, stemming from the duty to see justice done, to ensure respect for the law and to punish transgressors; the other is that of the aid worker, whose sole concern is to protect and assist all victims in the name of humanity.

The ICRC has the advantage of being a known quantity, because of its restricted mandate, its ability to act as a neutral intermediary and its long experience of working in the field of armed conflicts, where it has always done its best to show complete independence and impartiality. Its sui generis nature we are convinced, enables it usefully to complement all the other efforts made in an effective, concerted approach.

Creating space for humanitarian work does not imply isolation, since encouraging States to show greater respect for international humanitarian law is obviously essential for the carrying out of humanitarian activities.

In this connection, we cannot conclude without mentioning the International Conference for the Protection of Victims of War, which took place from 30 August to 1 September 1993 in Geneva, under the auspices of the Swiss Government. The Conference's Final Declaration, adopted by consensus, constitutes, in our opinion, the starting point of a renewed commitment by States to respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law. In the field, these words must now be translated into practical action to prevent suffering and protect victims. The coordination of humanitarian work is not merely a

question of structure. It is primarily a state of mind which must be manifested by the will to act with the sole purpose of assisting as effectively as possible all those who are in need.

*The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.*